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THE BISHOP'S WALK

AND

THE BISHOP'S TIMES.

PRINTED BY R. AND R. CLARK

FOR

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THE BISHOP'S WALK

AND

THE BISHOP'S TIMES

BY ORWELL

Cambridge
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DEDICATION.

TO JOHN HUNTER, ESQ.
CRAIGCROOK.

My friend, I bring this little offering
To thee, assured, how small soe'er its worth,
That for the love which prompts me thou wilt love it,
And with thy love wilt make it beautiful.

For oft among thy flower-beds we had held
Free converse, where the budding yellow rose,
Prolific of its gifts the long year through,
Breaks into beauty, or the myrtle rare
With orient perfume scents the nimble breeze;
Now in the spring, when faint-sweet violets
Peep with their dim eyes, coy, amid the leaves,
Breathing forth raptures; in the Autumn now,
When the red creeper flushes all the house,
Save where the ivy clasps around the tower,

Or trails, with wandering shoots, about the eaves
And gargoyles grim fantastic,—fearless homes
Held by old swallows on a lease of love
Unbroken, immemorial. And at times,
When Summer rain pattered upon the leaves,
In the green cloisters of the ivy-walk
We mused, with ample range of large discourse;—
Of science broadening from phenomena
Diverse, to the great Unity which is God;
Of forces correlate, forecasting dim
Presages of a new philosophy
Concrete; of history made meaningless,
And lacking human interest, for lack
Of its diviner import, waiting still
The Epic soul. And ever with our speech
Mingled the interval of silent thought,
Not without reason, and the blithesome ring
Of cheery laughter, which had reason too,
And nimble wit and repartee, and apt
Quotation from the poets who have sung
Unchanging wisdom to a changeful world.
Then, by and bye, along the breezy heights
And lichened crags orange and grey and brown,
We strolled, where mountain ash and sombre pine

Crest with their various plumage thy loved hill;
Whence looking we could spy the far off May
Dim in the sea, the Lomonds' shadowy heights
Crowning the winding shores of kingly Fife,
Berwick's blue cone, the gray sea-withered scalp
Of Bass (where the wild sea-mew wings amidst
Heroic memories of a nation's sorrow
Still haunting there), and nearer Arthur seat
Shouldering the dingy surge of mist and smoke
From his great flanks, while the old Castle looms
Darkly above the city roofs and spires,
And pillared Calton veils amid the dusk
His monumental forms, and at our feet
Nestles among the chestnuts and the elms
Jeffrey's green turret and thy happy home.
So as we walked amid the beautiful,
And shaped our speech about the beautiful
In art or nature, evermore we found,
Though years of ripened wisdom lay between
And varied rich experience, rare agreement
And vision eye to eye; like instruments
Of diverse form and substance which record
An unexpected harmony, each to other
Filling the chord, to make a perfect strain.

And when the Winter early closed the day,
And the log crackled, and the lamp was lit,
And the long wind howled through the groaning trees,
And the great arm-chair to the fireside drawn
Allured to mild repose, which yet the glass
Of golden sack, or generous claret purpling
The quaint old flask of Venice-work, forbade
To become vacant idleness; then we
Held high discourse of God and Destiny,
And the dear Christ of human love and hope
Gathering the weary wandering ages round
The throne which was a cross, and conquering
By His meek passion; till Theology
Stript off its sorrowful garb again, and grew
An impotent scholastic. Or at times
We talked of those whose songs had charmed our youth;
Who of them were forgot, and who were still
Daily companions, faring on the road
With us, and with a deeper meaning speaking
Unto our deepening wants: Of Wordsworth doing
A tuneful ministry of love to all
God's common creatures, till the hedgerows sung
With choiring seraphim at cottage doors;
Of Coleridge dreaming, and discoursing words

Mystic and musical—formative fire-mist
Luminous, with a star or two in it,
Deeper in heaven than any star we know,
And sweeping over vaster breadths of space:
Of Keats whose senses were a kind of soul,
Living at every point of his fine frame,
And clothing subtlest thought in imagery
Tinted and perfumed and melodious:
Of Shelley, with the skylark singing, soaring,
And now in cloud invisible, and now
Without a cloud invisible, but still
Throbbing with passionate music, when the sense
Gurgled but half-articulate: Of Hunt,
Playing with lambent lightnings innocent
About life's surface, cheerily singing, genial
And very human, and yet now and then
Unconscious, childlike, lifting up the veil,
And glancing at the holiest with wonder—
Soon lost among the pictures and the pathos
Of our familiar life: of Tennyson,
Dropping so calmly down a quiet stream—
A witchèd river, yet an English stream—
'Mong the broad lilies and the whispering sedges,
Musing and singing, noting thoughtfully

The passionate throbbings of a troubled heart,
And passionate struggles of a wondrous age.
These all we canvassed, having sympathies
With all. Nor lacked discourse of nobler still—
Of people's Epic, and the learned muse
Of Milton; of the tragic sock, and eke
Of tragic symbol, tracking through the maze
Of sorrow and temptation the footprints
Mingled of God and man. So Goethe sang
His Faust; and so in Runic strain, unmeasured,
Guttural, yet with rarest tones of beauty,
Wailing the broken idols and the shrines
Even while he hurls them down, our modern Titan
Essays his vision of life's mystery.

Thus having shared thy fellowship, and heard
Manifold wisdom, truth profound, and pure
Utterance of taste; which I delightedly
Recall and treasure, and delightedly
Look forward to, making a threefold joy
Of hope and memory and present gladness;
I, grateful, bring mine offering to thee,
Assured thy love will scan it lovingly.

PREFACE.

NOBODY reads a preface now-a-days; and I can scarcely hope that mine will escape the common fate of its kindred. But whether it be read or not, there are excellent reasons why it should be written. I will, however, be merciful so far; for while I must inflict the preface, I will spare the reasons for it.

"The Bishop's Walk" is the name of a shady avenue at the west end of Dunblane Cathedral, leading from the ruins of the Episcopal palace to nowhere in particular. It is a pleasant walk, just long enough for a sedentary student, because he can think from end to end of it quite as well as if he were pacing to and fro in his study, and at the same time get all the benefit of those horrid *constitutionals* whose grand object is to walk away

from thought into an appetite. We do not wonder, therefore, at the tradition which ascribes to Archbishop Leighton a great fondness for this spot. It is a special favourite of our own, and we had often sauntered there, musing about the good bishop and his times, and trying to imagine what his thoughts and feelings must have been, as he looked away through the green ash-leaves to the troubled and stormy age in which he found himself so lamentably out of place. Thus the substance of this book gradually rose into form and clearness before the mind's eye, and at length urgently demanded some kind of utterance. For had not Leighton, alas! received precisely the honour and the justice which prophets proverbially obtain in their own country? In England, indeed, he was rightly and highly esteemed. In England one great thinker had associated with his Commentary on St. Peter one of the most profoundly suggestive volumes these latter days have seen. But here in Scotland, while we were strenuously calling attention to some of his compeers by the republication of their works —works mainly characterised by the original sin

of a book, viz., that they are quite faultless and entirely unreadable—all this time, the cold shade of ecclesiastical polemics lay on the honoured name of Leighton, and almost nothing was done to open to his countrymen the rich and pious stores of the good Bishop of Dunblane. It seemed good, therefore, and surely high time, to say a word in behalf of our Scottish Fenelon.

At any rate, it is fit that we should try to understand him, so as not to be unjust to his memory. For in the intensity of that polemical earnestness, which has always distinguished the national character, we are apt to make little or no allowance for those who are constitutionally averse from those contendings in which "we live, and move, and have our being." We rarely try to look at things from their point of view, or to exercise towards them the "charity which thinketh no evil." Indeed, that sort of charity is in Scotland generally viewed with suspicion; it is certainly no longer reckoned among the cardinal virtues, if it has not fallen from the catalogue of virtues altogether. For here, as soon as any one begins to talk much of

charity, it is commonly thought he is going to turn an Anglican, or a Socinian, or something or other which he should not be. It may be useless, then, to ask for a charitable construction of Leighton's conduct; but I would fain hope that among a people famed for their psychological studies, it will not at any rate be found uninteresting to try to solve the problem of this good bishop's life. Here was a servant of God who found himself strangely ranged on the devil's side in the great conflict of the age, though fully minded all the while to fight the battle of the Lord. That is the problem, settle it as we may. For, that the struggle of those days involved constitutional government, liberty of conscience and true religion in this land, is surely past all question now among men who think, or who have any tolerable capacity for thinking. I am no mere eulogist of the popular party, as will appear fully by and bye; but I know no men in history who could be more fitly described as "The Wicked," than Charles and James; Lauderdale and Melfort; Fairfoul, Sydserf and Claverhouse, *et hoc genus omne.* Yet, side by side with them, we find honour-

able statesmen like Tweeddale, and Murray the founder of the royal society; a bishop like Leighton, and pious divines like Burnett, Charteris, and Forbes of Corse—all men of blameless repute and high moral purpose. Now, it does seem but fair that we should endeavour to get some little insight into their character, and to understand how they came to play the part which they did. For the present, however, we are only concerned about one of them.

In the Bishop's Walk, then, my object has been to place Leighton clearly before the reader; not putting my own opinions into his mouth, but saying for him what, so far as I understand him, he would have said for himself. I do not hold myself responsible for all he is made here to utter; but only for the truth of my conception of his character. To me he appears indeed about as beautiful a spirit as ever lighted on this earth—an angel whom we entertained quite unawares, and certainly not with an angel's entertainment. Yet I do not defend all his conduct, nor do I think it were well if all the world were like him. Greatly more given to speculation

than to action, he was, like all such men, a lover of peace, and shrunk with instinctive repugnance from the scholastic polemics of the time. Hence, while he profoundly sympathized with men like Samuel Rutherford in their purely religious opinions and feelings, yet, in ecclesiastical polemics, between him and them there lay a great gulf through which surged the noisy waters of contention. For Leighton was not only contemplative and peace-loving, which some of them were too, but he was also touched with that mystic spiritualism which is apt to look on religion as something above and apart from every-day life and duty. Always there has existed in Scotland an element of this kind—strong enough to give the higher circles of piety among us a sickly and shadowy hue, yet not sufficiently energetic to affect materially our general ecclesiastical conduct. Such mystic spiritualism has its private region of emotion and sensibility from which it is loth to be dislodged, even at the call of urgent duty, and to which it ever returns, feeling that its contact with these very duties of common life has in some measure marred the delicate down upon the wings

which would fain be soaring to heaven. Leighton, it seems to me, partook of this spirit. Besides these qualities, his mind appears also to have had that peculiar historical conformation which latterly is again appearing to revive and influence the world. The recoil from Romanism and Church authority had in Scotland given rise to an intense individualism, which, of course, has its advantages and its dangers, just as much as the opposite tendency. To this spirit Leighton, from the very nature of his mind, could not entirely give in. He could not believe that the continuity of the Church had ever been completely broken. He could not think, as men appeared generally to think, that there had been no Church history before the Reformation, but only a history of Anti-Christ. Therefore, while in all essential matters of theology thoroughly Protestant and Calvinist, he allowed in minor points of order a higher authority to continuous ecclesiastical tradition than at all accorded with the notions of his brethren. This, with the otherwise fine poetic nature of the man, awakened in the minds of the more narrow and rigid dogmatists of the age the

groundless suspicion of a tendency to Romanism; which found also a shadow of greater likelihood from the conduct of his brother, and from his own frequent visits to certain Jansenist priests then residing at Douay. Yet nothing could be more utterly destitute of solid foundation. It was, however, largely believed, for it suited a party to have it believed; and parties rarely scruple to sacrifice a good man for what they think a good cause.

Such is my conception of Leighton's character. To break the monotony of a prolonged reflection, I have introduced also an imaginary personage, and a fictitious incident. But though fictitious, it is perfectly historical. And, lest the critic should puzzle at such a statement, let me explain, that it is an incident which I have no reason to believe happened to Leighton, but which might have done so, as the like happened to many in those days, when, for mere opinion, the excellent of the earth were given up to the tender mercies of a soldiery brutalized already by the ferocities of civil war.

So much for Leighton personally; and his portraiture was the chief aim of this book. But

when that had been realized, so far at least as lay in me to do it, there appeared yet further need of setting the picture in its proper frame—presenting the man in the midst of his age. Hence the minor poems of the volume, about which also I may be permitted to say a word here.

Latterly, among the more cultivated classes, especially in England, this part of Scottish history has grown to be extremely distasteful. What we, north of the Tweed, look to as verily our heroic age, educated Englishmen turn from with nausea. And for my part I do not greatly wonder at this. Those times have never yet found a historian. Clear and honest insight into the meaning of them is hardly to be discovered anywhere in existing literature, if we except the imperfect though truthful picture of Lord Macaulay. For Burnet, while he tells faithfully what he saw, yet lived but a bustling superficial kind of life, and did not see much beneath that surface. Wodrow, a diligent collector of materials, has not perhaps been always careful to sift the true from the false; and at any rate a mere gathering of incidents is no more history than a

bundle of facts and experiments constitutes a science. Laing, Brodie, Stephenson, Kirkton, and Mr. Mark Napier, have all laboured on this field industriously, and not unprofitably; yet, with all deference, we submit that the history of those times has still to be written. Quite lately, Mr. Dodds has published a series of lectures on The Fifty Years' Struggle. They contain not a little graphic description, and some suggestive thoughts, which the historian, when we get him, will not overlook; but they partake of the inevitable defects of the lecture form, and besides, are rather a defence of the Covenanters than the story of the age. Such a defence I believe was needed, but it has only proved our need of something better still. Scott, indeed, with his wonderful imagination, in spite of counteracting prejudices, gave on the whole a truer picture, at least of one aspect of the time, than perhaps any historian has done. Nor do I forget that my friend Professor Blackie has touched on it in his Lyrical Poems; and that Professor Aytoun has written excellent verses about Claverhouse and Montrose. But while I am deeply sensible of the manifold gifts and brilliancies

of Professor Blackie, some of whose other poems, I venture to think, have got but scant justice; and while I am ready to acknowledge the fine faculty of Mr. Aytoun; I cannot think that their writings on this subject have given us any real insight into those times. I can sympathize with the generous love of liberty in which the former sings of the Covenanters; I can admire heartily the spirited verses in which the latter glorifies the cavaliers; but I am not led to say:—"Now I understand those men a little better than I did." Blackie and Aytoun I do understand better, but neither Peden, nor Claverhouse, nor any of their compeers. We could not, therefore, direct any one where to find a clear and honest picture of the age; if we except, indeed, Mr. Chambers' Domestic Annals of Scotland, which provide at least the materials, honestly and amply, for all who can provide the mind to fashion them into shape and clearness.

On the whole, then, it is really no wonder if Englishmen are weary of this theme. They have been led to regard the Scottish struggle of those times as a mere dreary polemic of no living interest

or power in these days, and from whose uncouth formulas they instinctively recoil. And yet the contest was in both kingdoms identical, though its form was in the one political, in the other ecclesiastical. And this difference arose most naturally from the historical position of the two countries. In England liberty depended on a free Parliament, in Scotland its foundation was a free Assembly. While the great statesmen of the south, therefore, contended for the privileges of the Lower House; in the north the patriot party fought for the rights of the Ecclesiastical Courts; both having precisely the same end in view. For in Scotland there never was a Parliament, in the English sense of the word. We had a thing, indeed, of the same name, as they had in France, from which ours was borrowed; but it was a mere court for registering the royal decrees. The people never looked to it for help. No free debate there ever discussed a national grievance. Constituted as it was, and restricted by the Lords of the Articles, it never could be anything but a tool of the party in power. The only free popular assembly in which the people were repre-

sented, was the Supreme Court of the Church; and accordingly, the patriot party felt that to sacrifice this, was to give up the only legal means they had of expressing the will of the people; which being gone, no man might open his mouth without becoming liable to a charge of *Leze-Majesté*. Let this be remembered, and the ecclesiastical character of our Scottish struggle will appear to the English mind less strange and repulsive; and its formulas will be seen in their true significance and value, as the ensigns of an army, every one of which is precious, not for its inherent worth, but for what it represents.

I must not, however, dwell upon this, for of course these poems do not enter on that field. That is the region of historical dissertation; and all I attempt here is a little historical portraiture. Nor is this less needed than the other. For, as already hinted, the history of this period is very much a mere ghost story, so shadowy and unreal its characters appear. Now, while there was no great commanding mind, either among the statesmen or the clergy, there was wonderful variety and

force of character in the country. The manifold elements of human life were seething and boiling, as in all revolutionary periods; now casting up horrible crimes, and by and bye the noblest heroisms, and nowise dealing in mere vague shadows. Good or bad, they were men who lived then, and no more abstractions than men are now. In these shorter poems, then, I have sought to give an idea of Leighton's times by clear portraiture of some of the elements of character amid which he lived, making each person speak for himself, in what Robert Browning would perhaps call a series of Dramatic Lyrics. I believe they are faithful historical pictures; and, as the artist, who has painted a gallery of portraits, is not required to write under them that this is an ugly fellow, and the other a manifest villain, so without expressing any opinion I have left each to tell his own tale.

And even the worst and most grotesque of these portraits, if it be true, has its historical significance and value. It may seem absurd enough, now-a-days, to record the monomaniacal confessions of a reputed witch. Yet at the time such things were

believed by good Christians; and it was one of the charges against the government that it was growing remiss in the punishment of these offenders. Would that this had been the worst crime of which it was guilty! Now, apart from its bearing on a very curious page of human history and psychological inquiry, this witch element in the seventeenth century has its interest for all times, as an illustration of the relation subsisting between science and christianity. For while the Church clung to the belief in Black Art, resting on a mistaken interpretation of texts, the progress of scientific truth gradually established its absurdity and impossibility. And the remarkable thing is that Christianity nevertheless remained firm as ever. Any other religion would have fallen before such an exposure, because other religions are identified with their scientific errors; but though whole generations of Christian men may involve themselves in similar delusions and mistakes, the Gospel itself stands clear of all impeachment. Would that Churches only learnt to have more confidence in Christianity, and to let science fearlessly follow out its researches, assured that their results

will be no more injurious in other matters than they have been in regard to witchcraft! Then again, as to characters like Rothes and Deacon Birse, some may be disposed to quarrel with an author for attempting to delineate such worthless individuals. But here, too, we must remember, not only that such unprincipled men existed in those times, as they no doubt do in our own, but that, for some thirty years, they had it all their own way, and controlled the destinies of the nation. As the Psalmist says, "The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted." No picture of the age therefore could be complete without them. And besides, it must be remembered that bad as they were, they were the natural product of the intolerance and over-government of the previous times. It is painful to write this; but the truth is that the extraordinary outburst of reckless wickedness that immediately succeeded a period of apparent decency and piety, can be accounted for only on the principle that the systematic compulsion, exercised by the popular party, produced merely a hypocritical conformity, under which there lurked such baseness and hate

as I have attempted to portray in the Aberdeen burgess. The Restoration removed this constraint, and revealed what had long been festering beneath, as when you lift a stone from an old damp mossy wall, and discover the vilest creeping things thriving below it. Nor can we wonder at this demoralization when we remember that, under the severest penalties, all men were required to take the covenant, and at the same time were told that they must do it with a good conscience, in all sincerity of heart. When will men learn that we can be drawn to God only with "cords of love?"

Yet, with all this, the Scottish Covenanters were noble and right-hearted men; nor could any thing be more absurd than the prevailing opinion that they were a set of enthusiastic fanatics. Such fanatics doubtless there were about the outskirts of the party, as there are more or less connected with all great reforming movements. Yet he would understand little of our later Reform times, who should identify Brougham, and Grey, and Russell with the Birmingham rioters and Glasgow weavers; and as little does he comprehend the seventeenth

century, who classes its great men in the same category with those whom its long oppression had driven mad. As a party, indeed, we have reason to rejoice that neither they nor their opponents absolutely succeeded in carrying out their ideas; but that out of the struggle a civil government emerged, free alike from feudal and from ecclesiastical traditions, and strong enough to enforce both liberty and order for the good of all. Yet at the same time, it were ungrateful to forget that, but for the long struggle and unbroken determination and heroism of the Covenanters, we might never have achieved the freedom we now enjoy.

I hope my readers will excuse this long preface. It seemed necessary both for the sake of those of whom I was writing, and also for personal reasons in order to avoid possible misunderstandings.

Here and there in the minor poems I have used pretty freely Scottish words and idioms where they seemed most suitable; and English readers will excuse this, perhaps, for the sake of the Scotchmen who will like the book all the better.

EDINBURGH, *January* 1861.

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THE BISHOP'S WALK.

PART I.

THE CATHEDRAL TOWN.[1]

1.

A GRAY old Minster on the height
Towers o'er the trees and in the light ;
A gray old town along the ridge
Slopes, winding downward to the bridge—
A quaint, old, gabled place,
With Church stamped on its face.

2.

The quiet Close, secluded, dim,
The lettered scroll, the pillar slim,
The armorial bearings on the wall,
The very air you breathe, are all
Full of Church memories,
And the old sanctities.

3.

And beautiful the gray old place
With characters of antique grace,
That tell the tale of pious work
Beneath the spire and round the kirk,
And growth of Law and Right
Where Christ had come with light.

4.

Begrimed with smoke, a monotone
Of equal streets in brick or stone,
With squalid lane, and flaunting Hall,
Infrequent spire, and chimneys tall;
You know the place wherein
The weary toil and spin.

5.

With jalousie and portico,
And oriel large, where sea-winds blow,
And light parade, and ample streets,
Where idler with the idler meets;
You know the haunt of pleasure,
Or sick resort of leisure.

6.

Far otherwise the old church town,
With the gray minster for its crown:
Its tide of work has ebbed away;
Its pleasuring was never gay;
Yet there the morning broke,
And the new world awoke.

7.

And it is well, amid the whirr
Of restless wheels and busy stir,
To find a quiet spot where live
Fond pious thoughts conservative,
That ring to an old chime,
And bear the moss of time.

8.

Like ivy clasping ruin gray,
And greenly clothing its decay;
Like garden haunted to this hour
With smell of some old-fashioned flower;
So sweet the dim old town
Still with its minster crown.

9.

There is a strange philosophy[2]
Among the wondrous things that be;
Even that the path which man has trod
Progresses still away from God,
And that we flourish most
As piety is lost.

10.

As sacred turns to secular,
As worship wanes, and temples are
Unvisited and voiceless grown,
And only rigid law is known:
Even so, they say, do we
Achieve our destiny.

11.

Alas! and must the deep divine
Impress of God, and the grand line
Of our high parentage be lost,
To reach the meagre winning-post
Of modern social saw,
And economic law?

12.

Nay, but in this quaint place I see
The nobler thought of history;
The birth of civil right and peace,
And progress that shall never cease,
Amid the chaunt and hymn
In cloistered alley dim.

13.

And sweeter far and grander too
The ancient civilization grew,
With holy war and busy work
Beneath the spire and round the kirk,
Than miles of brick and stone
In godless monotone.

14.

For here, in wild and lawless days,
The Culdee waked a psalm of praise[3]
For Gospel light and liberty,
And help of man's great misery;
And Darkness from its throne
Fled at the Cross alone.

15.

So was it then—so is it now,
And will for ever be, I trow:
The only spell of might is He,
The watchword and the victory;
And thou shalt suffer loss,
But conquer in the Cross.

16.

Back rolls the Darkness, as they come,
The victor griefs of Christendom;
Omnipotent sorrows only heal
The evils of the common weal;
And dim and ever dimmer
All other lights shall glimmer.

17.

The good monk had his working day,
The good priest also passed away,
The mitre faded, and the crook,
And chanted hymn, and lettered book;
But in this quiet place
They left a natural grace.

18.

A quaint old place—a minster gray,
And gray old town that winds away,
Through gardens, down the sloping ridge
To river's brim and ancient bridge,
Where the still waters flow
To the deep pool below.

PART II.

THE WALK.

19.

Where looks the western window far
Unto the liquid evening star,
And can Benledi dimly view,
And the gray mists on Benvenue,
And long brown uplands, felt
In distant air to melt;

20.

There where the green ash interweaves
Irregular branch and slender leaves,
For umbrage soft—a pale green shade
With broken sunlights in the glade,
There lies a pleasant way
In gloaming all the day.

21.

And far below the waters clear
Murmur their presence on the ear,
Scarce seen for dipping boughs that seek
The light, or only when a streak
Of sunshine cometh home
Upon the crisp white foam.

22.

A pleasant walk, when singing bird
Upon the bending twig is heard,
And rustling leaf that bids you hush!
And hear the slow still waters gush
Far down below unseen,
Beneath the branches green.

23.

A pleasant path at noonday bright,
With arching boughs to screen the light;
A pleasant walk at close of day,
With red lights glancing on the way,
And golden showers that fall
Through seeding hemlocks tall.

24.

Here swell the Ochils green; and there
The Cromlex melts in distant air;
Benledi and Benlomond far
Front the rude crags of U-am-var;
And by the shady way
Still towers the minster gray.

25.

The many-pillared western gate
With rounded arch elaborate,
But weather-worn, you partly see:—
A net-work of fine tracery;
A cunning antique lace
Draping a vacant space.

26.

And high above the churchyard wall
Springs the light western window tall,
With almond shape, in simple skill
Clasping unequal lances still,
While art its trefoil places
High in the interspaces.

27.

And through the window you can see
Lofty light-pillared gallery
In vista long, and windows still
Of lances clasped with simple skill,
And fern and lichen doing
Their work of graceful ruin.

28.

Nor gargoyle lacks, grotesque and quaint,
Nor saintly niche without its saint,
Nor buttress lightsome, nor the tower
Where the bell marks the passing hour,
And peals out with our mirth,
And tolls our earth to earth.

29.

And o'er the dim old centuries
The minster bridges, unto these
Dull times of cant and commonplace,
From days of chivalry and grace,
Spanning the vague abyss
With memories of bliss.

30.

Oft Leighton's subtle fancy sped
Far back unto its youth, and read,
In sculptured forms and texts and rhymes,
The secret of the ancient times,
And their divinest sense
Of mystic reverence.

31.

And in its Cross the Christ he saw;
And in its pillars stedfast law;
Its dim light bade with awe admire;
And thought soared heavenward on the spire,
Urged onwards by the chime
That told the fleeting time.

PART III.

THE BISHOP.

32.

Two hundred years have come and gone,
Since that fine spirit mused alone
On the dim walk, with faint green shade
By the light-quivering ash-leaves made,
And saw the sun go down
Beyond the mountains brown.

33.

Slow-pacing, with a lowly look,
Or gazing on the lettered book
Of Tauler, or a-Kempis, or
Meek Herbert with his dulcimer,[4]
In quaintly pious vein
Rehearsing a deep strain:

34.

Or in the Gold-mouthed Greek he read
High rhetoric, or what was said
Of Augustine's experience,
Or of the Gospel's grand defence
Before assembled lords,
In Luther's battle-words.

35.

Slow-pacing, with a downcast eye,
Which yet, in rapt devotion high,
Sometimes its great dark orb would lift,
And pierced the veil, and caught the swift
Glance of an angel's wing,
That of the Lamb did sing;

36.

And with the fine pale shadow, wrought
Upon his cheek by years of thought,
And lines of weariness and pain,
And looks that long for home again;
So went he to and fro
With step infirm and slow.

37.

A frail, slight form—no temple he,
Grand, for abode of Deity;
Rather a bush, inflamed with grace,
And trembling in a desert place,
And unconsumed with fire,
Though burning high and higher.

38.

A frail, slight form, and pale with care,
And paler from the raven hair
That folded from a forehead free,
Godlike of breadth and majesty—
A brow of thought supreme
And mystic, glorious dream.

39.

And over all that noble face
Lay somewhat of soft pensiveness
In a fine golden haze of thought,
That seemed to waver light, and float
This way and that way still,
With no firm bent of will.

40.

God made him beautiful, to be
Drawn to all beauty tenderly,
And conscious of all beauty, whether
In things of earth or heaven or neither ;
So to rude men he seemed
Often as one that dreamed.

41.

But true it was that, in his soul,
The needle pointed to the pole,
Yet trembled as it pointed, still[5]
Conscious alike of good and ill ;
In his infirmity
Looking, O Lord, to thee.

42.

Beautiful spirit ! fallen, alas,
On times when little beauty was ;
Still seeking peace amid the strife,
Still working, weary of thy life,
Toiling in holy love,
Panting for heaven above :

43.

I mark thee, in an evil day,
Alone upon a lonely way ;
More sad-companionless thy fate,
Thy heart more truly desolate,
Than even the misty glen
Of persecuted men.

44.

For none so lone on earth as he
Whose way of thought is high and free,
Beyond the mist, beyond the cloud,
Beyond the clamour of the crowd,
Moving, where Jesus trod,
In the lone walk with God.

PART IV.

THE MEDITATION.

45.

So musing in the dim green way,
Beside the minster old and gray,
Beside the river murmuring slow
Far down the dipping boughs below,
As sunk the evening sun
Amid the shadows dun;

46.

So musing to and fro he went,
Dreaming of law and government,
And civil broil, and discontent
That struggled to have scope and vent,
And of a nation sick
Of crafty politick.

47.

"Alas!" he said, "an evil time,[6]
When simple truth is civil crime,
And God's anointed goes in quest
Of foolish mirth and ribald jest;
And the high task of rule
Falls or to knave or fool.

48.

"A king that only cares for pleasure,
A court that dances to his measure,
A policy of passing shifts,
A parliament that, thoughtless, drifts
With any tide to-day
On any evil way!

49.

"And strange, alas! the work they plan:
For, without faith in God or man,
In human worth, or truth divine,
Or holy priest, or sacred shrine,
Or aught the wise revere,
Or aught the lowly fear.

50.

"They care not for thy kirk, O Lord,
They reck not of thy blessed Word,
Alike the mitre and the rood,
Alike to them the cap and hood,
Their only wish on earth
The foam upon its mirth :

51.

"And yet they persecute and slay
For mere opinion day by day;
As if they had a zeal for truth
That stilled the pitiful voice of ruth,
And bade them quench in death
The enemies of faith.

52.

"Ay me ! ay me ! I cannot tell
How on such hapless times I fell,
That they should cloak the wrong they do
With my poor name, and call it too
A work of God, a work
Of Christ and holy kirk.

53.

"The wolf is ravening in the fold,
The robber prowling for the gold,
The wheat is trampled for the tares,
The vineyard sown with hate and cares,
Nor prayer nor psalm is heard,
Nor ever a holy word.

54.

"The trooper with the curate swears,
The curate calls it troopers' prayers,
And subtle craft and cruel deed
Sow broadcast o'er the land a seed
That shall be reaped in sorrow
For many a dark to-morrow.

55.

"And God's dear saints, alas! are dead,
Or to the misty moorlands fled,
Or, with oppression mad, they come
To battle with the trump and drum,
To be trampled by the force
Of the rider and his horse.

56.

"And all for what? alas, the while!
Those deal in wrath, and hate, and guile,
And these to sorrow bow them, all
For forms ecclesiastical;
And for the seed of grace
We but the husk embrace.

57.

"Ay me! ay me! I seem to see
An angry God look down on me;
The fleece is dewy on the hills;
But dry and dewless now all else;
Nor reverence, nor fear,
Nor grace of God is here.

58.

"O weary time! O dreary age
Of mine unhappy pilgrimage!
A nation brooding discontent,
And Christ's fair garment soiled and rent,
A king in folly sunk,
His lords in madness drunk!

59.

"And I—alas! I was not meant
For these great cares of government;
To moderate the angry stir
Of troubled kirk and presbyter,
And settle wordy jars
Of harsh polemic wars.

60.

"I have no gift that way; I think
At good men's errors I would wink;
A good man's foible should be borne:
Yet shall I get but double scorn
From those the wrong that do,
And those that suffer too.

61.

"Yet that were light, if I might serve
The blessed Christ, and never swerve;
Nor do I grudge the sacrifice
Of all that I esteem of price
To do thy will, O Lord,
According to thy Word.

62.

"I care not for the weary care,
I heed not of the hate I share,
I would not murmur or complain
At cruel wrong or bitter pain;
For thou, O Lamb of God,
This way thyself hast trod.

63.

"But Lord, I pray thee, send thou him
Whom thou wilt send; mine eyes are dim
For lack of faith and hope: and see
Thy work will suffer now in me;
For I am all alone,
Trusted and loved by none.

64.

"Alone, like one untimely born,
And wandering through his age forlorn,
Too early he, or else too late,
His heritage a common hate,
Looking for sympathy
But in Eternity.

65.

"The men I love my way deplore;
The men I loathe do hate me more;
With whom I live I have no ties;
With whom I left, sad memories;
With none have I the power
To help this evil hour.

66.

"And doubtless all the blame is mine;
Yet, Lord, let not the scaith be Thine;
They love me not; and yet I love
Them all, all earthly things above;
And I could almost be
Accursed for them and Thee.

67.

"O weary heart! O hapless fate!
O evil times of strife and hate!
The raven finds a carcass there,
The poor dove flutters in the air,
And longs again to flee
Unto the ark and Thee.

68.

"Lord, take me hence; what profit I
In this great flood of misery?
I am but tempted to repine
At mine own doings, Lord, and Thine;
I have no heart to live,
Having no help to give.

69.

"O brother, loving, gentle, true,[7]
I thought not to be scorned of you,
Who, from the prison and the grief,
Expressed the balm of sweet relief
For troubled hearts and weary
Whose life was sad and dreary.

70.

"And thou who, breathing faith and love,
All earthly treasures far above,
Still pantest for the diadem
Of 'mother dear Jerusalem;'[8]
I thought not to be parted
From thee thus broken-hearted.

71.

"We have one God, one Christ, one home,
One love; and lighter than the foam
Is the one element of strife
That separates our way of life;
And O I love you still
Through all the good and ill.

72.

"And to be joined with him—ah me!
The Judas of apostacy,
The man of craft and blood and gold,
Bitter Ahitophel and cold;
O cursed fate to be
Linked with such company!

73.

"I heed not much of forms; I thought
'Twere well indeed if we were brought
From our lax ways and sects and hate,
To primitive episcopate,
And prayers lisped of old
By infants in the fold.

74.

"Yet reck I not of forms; full well
I know the pearl gives to the shell
Some beauty and virtue like its own,
And shining hue and gorgeous tone;
And the old forms to me
Gleam with old sanctity.

75.

"Yet what boot they? And what boots all
Our garb ecclesiastical,
The white-stoled priest, the altar high,
If we do err from charity?
O God, all Gods above,
Knit us with cords of love.

76.

"I think there was a Church of Christ,
That this poor earth of ours rejoiced,
Ere Luther championed the high truth,
Or Calvin taught our eager youth
To scorn the ancient ways
And all the former days.

77.

"Perhaps I err; but such a break
With the old faith I could not make—
Such prayers I thought the saints had breathed,
Such hymns apostles had bequeathed,
Such customs spake to me
Of Christ in Bethany.

78.

"What, if the ages could espy
More truth than either you or I?
What, if their wants discovered gold,
And treasures rare and manifold,
Which do not often fall
To mere art logical?

79.

"We are not single; age with age
Is linked; and truth's high heritage
Is the slow fruit of bended knees
Through the long growth of centuries;
Nor is it yet complete,
Nor yet all counterfeit.

80.

"O, I would purge the holy kirk
Of poor device, and heathen work,
And idol carved, and idol hymn,
And Jove and Thor and Odin grim,
Which tinge our thoughts, I fear,
More than doth well appear.

81.

"Yet would I leave the altar high,
And the old chanted melody,
The virgin-mother on the wall,
The apostle-crownèd capital,
And Bishop minister
To faithful presbyter.

82.

"There surely was a church of old,
With pious customs manifold,
That ruled the savage in the wild,
And brought him to the Lord a child,
And reared the structure high
Of noblest chivalry.

83.

"Christ was not buried in the tomb
All those long centuries of gloom;
Nor do the ages drift ashore
Nought but loose waifs upon the hoar
Old billows, as they chime
God's doings through all time.

84.

"Yet O I love not man's device
Of policy and statecraft nice;
Nor would I plant what I love most,"
Christ's very Gospel, at the cost
Of hate and blood which we
Bequeath to history.

85.

"And I had been content to try
This or the other. What care I
For priest or presbyter, or lawn
And mitre? I am nowise drawn
By words and names and shows,
But what they do enclose.

86.

"But men of crafty policy,
That neither love the land nor me,
Nor God, nor Christ, nor prayer, nor praise,
Have dragged me on their evil ways,
And torn my heart from them
That love Jerusalem.

87.

"Ay me! ay me! that I should be
The tool of this great perjury,
For Lauderdale and Middleton
And Sharpe to wreak their fury on
The pasture-sheep of Christ,
Inveigled and enticed!

88.

"O that I were in meek Douay,[10]
Among the quiet priests that pray
In chapel low or chancel dim,
Chanting the plain-song or the hymn,
Or the 'Stabat Mater,'
Or 'Veni Creator.'

89.

"I may not bind me with their creed,
Though some of them are free indeed,
Or only thrall to heaven above,
And O they bind me by their love
To Him whose name on earth
Is ointment pourèd forth.

90.

"Nor can I say but vesper hymn,
And the old chaunt in chapel dim,
Sound to me as an infant's voice
When Faith is young, and doth rejoice,
And goeth all day long
Singing a quiet song:—

91.

"A voice that lingers on mine ear
From bride, whose Bridegroom still is near;
In her mysterious mirthfulness,
And trembling joy, and wondering grace,
A tender music sighing
Upon his bosom lying.

92.

"But yet they wrong me much who say
That I have erred, and gone astray
From Christ, the Way, the Truth, the Life,
Because I shrink from civil strife,
And schoolmen's quirks, and faint
Cobwebs of argument.

93.

"I love the kirk, with ages hoar;
I love old ways, but Christ far more;
I love the fold, I love the flock,
But more my Shepherd and my Rock,
And the great Book of grace
That mirrors His dear face.

94.

"O sweet the story and the psalm,
And prophecy is healing balm,
Like virgin-comb apostle's lips,
Like fate the grand Apocalypse;
But sweet, above all other,
Thou Saviour, Friend, and Brother.

95.

"Once my soul wandered; but it was[11]
Another, darker way, alas!
Yet not my heart erred, but my head,
For still my fainting spirit bled
To think that, day by day,
God seemed to fade away.

96.

"I fain had clung to Thee, O Lord:
I fain had kept Thy holy Word:
I did not seek to 'scape from Thee,
But Thou didst fade away from me;
And all Thy glory seemed
A dream which men had dreamed.

97.

Dark thoughts were these—a weary time:
Father, impute it not for crime,
That in his fever Thy poor child
Raved wildly in his fancies wild;
For still I found no rest
Save lying on thy breast.

98

"Ay me! ay me! would I might be
In old Ulshaven[12] by the sea,
To dream beside the dreamy wave,
And choose me out a quiet grave,
Where the long ocean chime
Tells the long march of time.

99.

"O just to seat me by the tide
Of life, and see its galleys glide,
With every sail on every yard,
And speculate their whitherward
Upon the shoreless sea,
Dim with man's destiny!

100.

"To stand apart, and set my heart
Alone upon the better part,
And hear afar the idle din
Of evil tongues that bruit their sin,
And soar to Thee, O Lord,
High on Thy holy Word!

101.

"I was not meant for action; I
Like wind-harp in the window sigh,
When breath of Heaven is passing by;
But from a ruder finger fly
The long-drawn notes, and fall
Harsh and unmusical.

102.

"Lord, place me where Thy breath may be
Tremulous all day long on me;
So shalt Thou get my little worth,
So shall my use be to the earth;
For this is all of me—
A voice that cries to Thee.

103.

"O weary heart! O weary years!
O troubled thoughts, and doubts, and fears!
O sorrow I cannot redress!
O cruel sense of helplessness!
Can it be wrong to weary
Of life so sad and dreary?"

PART V.

THE INCIDENT.

104.

Thus musing to and fro he went,
Dreaming of kirk and government;
While cawing rooks were homeward winging,
And bird on leafy bough was singing,
And Allan far below
Was rippling soft and slow;

105.

And kine stood listless in the stream
Where the red lights of evening gleam,
And whispering winds were tripping free
Down the high pillared gallery,
Or sighing as they pass
Over the churchyard grass.

106.

Still was the hour—the evening still:
Peace slumbered on the distant hill;
Peace, dreaming, smiled upon the cloud;
And earth seemed whispering Peace! aloud,
When any voice awoke
And that deep silence broke.

107.

And in the calm of such an hour
Old memories have a witching power,
Old times come back, old faces look
Up to us from the unread book;
The very grave seems made
To yield us back our dead.

108.

So dreaming now, there seemed to rise
A certain form before his eyes,
Personal, real; and yet he knew
'Twas but the mind's fine shadow grew
From dimness into clearness,
With a strange sense of nearness.

109.

They had been friends, when friendship is
A passion and a blessedness;
And in a tender sacrament
Unto the house of God they went,
And plighted love, caressing
The same dear cup of blessing.

110.

They had been friends in youth, most dear;
In studious night, and mirthful cheer,
And high discourse, and large debate,
Unmixed by bitterness or hate—
Their fellowship I ween,
A pleasant thing had been.

111.

He in Dalkeith a guide of men;
And he in old Newbattle then
Pastured the flock of Christ; and they
Like children had made holiday,
In old light-hearted times,
Under the elms and limes.

112.

But parted by unhappy fate
In sorrow deep, disconsolate,
One bore the mitre—one the rod
Of persecution for his God ;
And both had suffered loss,
Carrying a bitter cross.

113.

Alas ! if you look back and see
Friendship's old pictured gallery,
Where some are gone, and some are changed,
And some embittered and estranged,
And some you wronged, perchance,
Upbraid you with a glance.

114.

A sadder strain you shall not find
In all the measures of the mind,
Than these remembered faces wake,
When, silent as the falling flake,
Ghostly and pale and dumb,
In twilight dim they come.

115.

O bitter grief! O vain regret!
O ye, if ye were living yet!
O foolish youth, and cursed pride,
That kept me from a brother's side!
What is there of such price
Worth so great sacrifice?

116.

Seemed now at hand that friend of youth,
Who lovèd God, and man, and truth—
He knew it but an empty shade,
An image which the mind had made;
Yet shook with hope and fear,
As if he might be near.

117.

Then said the Bishop; "Where is he?
In lettered Utrecht 'neath the sea?
Among the wilds of Annandale?
Or where the Mayflower dropt her sail,
And dusky savage flew
Past in the light canoe?

118.

"No man of blood, or craft, or trick
Of cunning art and politic,
Or hair-brained dreaming fanatic;
But full of thought and calm and meek,
A king of men wert thou
Of the great eye and brow.

119.

"And where art thou? we need thee still:
Thine own folk need thee on the hill
For counsel and courage to meet their fate;
And thou art needed in the state—
O for but one like thee
To guide our destiny.

120.

"But woe's me! such as thou are driven
To loathe the earth and long for heaven;
And well for you aspiring thus;
But ill for our poor world and us;
Without the salt we rot,
Alas! and heed it not."

121.

Even as he spoke, a sudden shot
Jarred on the tenor of his thought,
With a strange sense of pain and fear,
Assured of some great sorrow near,
And waiting breathless till
Time should the dread fulfil:

122.

Nor waited long; for, staggering through
The wild-rose white with blossoms new,
With tottering step, and panting breath,
And blood upon his lips, and death
Pale on his cheek and dim,
Stood one confronting him.

123.

They stood a moment face to face;
He tall and with a stately grace;
A thin gray man, with thin gray hairs,
And weather-worn, and worn with cares;
And the good bishop shook,
As his lean hand he took.

124.

"My brother! O my brother!" More
He could not; but the stranger wore
A gentle smile upon his face
That softened with a stately grace;
And the old years of love
Bent, beaming from above.

125.

"I came to seek thee in my need,
Robert, as to a friend indeed;
A moment more, it had been well;
Yet better so; for who can tell
What a weak heart may do
For life, and live to rue?

126.

"For days they have been hunting me;
For days my thoughts have been of thee
With a great longing just to see
Thy face before the end should be;
And even now it seemed
Almost as if I dreamed;

127.

"So plain I saw thee on the hill,
My friend, mine own good Robert still;
As when we went in happier times,
By old Newbattle, 'neath the limes—
A sorry ending this
To my fond dream of bliss.

128.

"Yet if I might have chosen where
My death should hap, it had been here,
With thee to speed me on my flight,
And trim my lamp for gathering night;
Though I had wished to be
A twilight hour with thee.

129.

"No matter—all is well; thou art
Still mine old friend, still in my heart;
My journey ended, home is near;
And, as we part, the lights appear,
Flashing from sapphire floor
Through heaven's open door.

130.

"And grieve not, Robert; would'st thou weep
To see the sick child drop asleep,
Hushed on a mother's loving breast,
And gently sobbing into rest;
Now from all sorrow free,
Pain and anxiety?

131.

"And all is well; and we are well;
And thou wilt toll the passing bell
For a poor brother, who hath run
A weary race that now is done,
And with thine own hands lay
Me gently in the clay.

132.

"That was our covenant; and you
Promised beneath the dark old yew,
Whose branches o'er my Mary wave,
Whose shadow sweeps my children's grave,
That dying before thee
There thou would'st bury me.

133.

"And, Robert, hear me ere I die;
I know thy clear sincerity,
Thine old love of the old Church ways,
And the old ritual of praise,
And that thy fancy still
Dwelt pure amid the ill.

134.

"I never doubted thee; when some
Would have it thou wert almost come,
In feebleness and false compliance,
To seek with Rome a base alliance,
I held their words but light,
Knowing thy heart was right.

135.

"Yet, Robert, hear me ere I die;
The mitre sits uneasily
Upon a lowly head like thine,
Betrinketing a gift divine;
And there is blood below
Its vain and empty show.

136.

"Think, brother, of the crimes they do,
And consecrate them all with you;
Think of the poor afflicted realm,
And all the sorrows that o'erwhelm
The Lord's beloved sons,
His dear redeemèd ones.

137.

"You love the old church primitive,
In the old manner you would live,
But yet I know that Christ is more
To you than all your learned lore;
Ah! be not joined with them
That harm Jerusalem.

138.

"Now speak to me; and speed me on;
The night grows dark; I've been alone
For weeks among the moorlands bare,
Yet not alone, for Christ was there;
Eerie they were and sad,
But yet He made them glad.

139.

"How dark it grows! Is Robert here?
No matter, Lord, if thou art near;
And yet I wist that he would say
A kind word, ere I passed away,
A word on which to die
With a great hope peacefully.

140.

"He used to go down with a soul
Into the valley dark of dole,
Farther than any I ever knew;
A convoy great and precious to
Full many a troubled heart
Sad from the earth to part.

141.

"But, Lord, I think that I have fought
A good fight, and thou wilt allot
To me, a frail yet faithful child,
A crown unfading, undefiled,
And that thy dear 'well-done'
Waits me beyond the sun."

142.

Thus wandering, but right-hearted, he
Sunk on his friend, and peacefully
Died in his arms there as he stood,
And dyed him with his heart's dear blood,
And low together they
Upon the cold earth lay.

143.

And as he died, across his face,[13]
That beamed with such a stately grace,
There passed a look of quiet, quaint,
And subtle humour, all too faint
For any but an eye
Familiar to espy.

144.

But Leighton knew it long ago;
And as he watched it flickering low,
Lightening the eyes as they grew dim,
It rent the very heart of him,
To see that humour quaint
Gleam from the dying saint.

145.

As one that, in a lumber-room,
Cobwebbed, and left in dingy gloom,
Comes on a battered baby-doll,
With bitter anguish to his soul,
(For we from pleasures borrow
The pathos of our sorrow,)

146.

So Leighton, as he watched the smile
Play on the dying lips a while:
Old times came back, old humours gave
A deeper pathos to the grave,
A keener edge to grief
That now found no relief.

147.

Never again, O never more
Shall they hold speech of learned lore,
And saintly hymn, and pious work,
And hallowed love of holy kirk,
And duty to be done
As these last ages run;

148.

Never again, O never more
Together shall their thoughts explore
Far-reaching wisdom, deep, divine,
And secrets of the sacred mine;
Nor probe the hidden part
Of our deceitful heart;

149.

Never again, O never more
Shall taste the joys they knew of yore,
The fellowship of love and mirth,
The foam upon the cup of earth
That did exhilarate
Their hearts disconsolate.

150.

Cold by the dead the living lies,
Vague, looking on the glazing eyes,
Clasping the unresponsive palm,
And gazing on the visage calm
That beamed with kindly glow,
A little while ago.

PART VI.

BESIDE THE DEAD.

151.

Then cried the Bishop, kneeling by
The dead, as if himself would die,
In broken tones of wrath and grief
That struggled to obtain relief,
And if they found not vent
Had burst their tenement:—

152.

"O God—my God and his—how long?
When shall this sorrow cease and wrong?
O pitiful Christ, who lovest all,
Hope of the helpless, shall we call
Upon thy name in vain
To ease our cruel pain?

153.

"Unhappy country! thou art left
This day to mourn as one bereft
Of wisdom, counsel, courage here,
And antique faith and lowly fear,
And skill to guide the way
In wild distracted day.

154.

"Good men have fallen on either side—
The Great Montrose in haughty pride,
Keen Warriston, and deep Argyle,
And Napier, sagest of our isle;[14]
And since the great are dead,
Small men are great instead.

155.

"But thou, my friend, wert brave and true,
And had'st the scope of things in view;
Equal to greatest times, and still
Full of their good, free from their ill;
Too good for faction, yet
Driven to have part in it.

156.

"In troubled times of kirk or state,
Hurrying on change precipitate,
God sent the peoples heretofore
Of great and good men ample store,
And still the wasteful strife
Was charged with noble life.

157.

"But we are fallen on times of dearth
Of generous mind and lofty worth;
O all is little, mean, and bad,
And growing dark and very sad;
For thriftless too are we
In our great poverty.

158.

"There is no one to whom the eye
Of all the land turns hopefully;
But little men, with little shift,
Do let the groaning kingdom drift,
Through fickle change and chance,
To insignificance.

159.

"A noble land, once nobly led,
By them who God's deep counsel read,
Along a path of wisdom high,
And blended law and liberty;
But now become a scorn,
And helpless and forlorn!

160.

"Alas! and is it thus the state
Rewards the wise and good and great?
That brute dragoon should quench the life
Which might have ruled our civil strife,
Alone in royal might
Of wisdom and high right!

161.

"No trial held—no sifted proof—
No justice sitting calm, aloof
From human passion, human wrong,—
No advocate against the strong;
But by the vilest he
Meets a hard destiny!

162.

"O Christ, to the oppressèd dear,
Who in thy bottle every tear,
And every drop of blood and sweat,
And every scorn, and word of hate,
Keepest for evermore,
Numbering o'er and o'er;

163.

"O Thou who sittest on the throne,
I know thou wilt avenge thine own;
Thou seest not as mortals see,
Thou lovest them that trust in thee,
And Thou wilt yet befriend
Thy people and defend.

164.

"And we have built a Babel tower,
Presumptuous, in an evil hour;
And sorry foundation we have laid,
Who in the blood of saints have made
Altar, and priest, and shrine,
Hateful, O Lord, to Thine.

165.

"A few short years—a few dark days—
Whose wrath shall yet work out thy praise,
And all our glory in the dust
Shall crumble, Lord, for Thou art just:
Who build upon the sand
Their fall is near at hand.

166.

"But Thou upon Thy people look,
Whose names are written in Thy Book,
And who are standing in thy sight
Robed in the garments clean and white,—
And for salvation come
To Thy vexed Christendom!

167.

"O King of glory—Lord of might,
Who hatest ill, and lovest right,
Although Thy ways in darkness be
And strangeness and perplexity,
Hear from the depths our cry,
Shine forth in majesty;

168.

"And look upon this land of ours,
And save it from unhallowed powers
Of darkness, that enthronèd be,
And stablish the iniquity,
And call it law divine,
And holy will of Thine.

169.

"O hear the fainting voice that cries
From earth, afflicted, to the skies;
Helpless, the cause is now appealed
From desolate home and bloody field
To Thee, the Lord of might,
And Judge who doest right.

170.

"Surely for some great destiny
This land of ours was led by Thee,
Through foreign war and civil strife,
To such a pitch of noble life,
With freedom for its crown,
And genius and renown.

171.

"And thou, brave soldier of thy Lord,
Sleep in the peace of his sure Word,
Sleep, for thy works have gone before,
Sleep on, but not for evermore;
For Thou hast vanquished death
In victory of faith.

172.

"O might I only go with Thee!
I'm weary of this misery,
I'm weary of a hopeless task,
I'm weary of their pious mask,
That hides the deed of shame
With Christ's beloved name.

173.

"To see the arts of government
And law unto oppression bent,
And lies, and cruelties, and sleights—
High treason unto human rights,
And mockery of Him
Between the cherubim!

174.

"Lord, take me hence, if it may be,
Away from this, away to Thee;
Where, in exulting angel strain,
He now forgets all grief and pain,
Lost in the love of Thee,
To all eternity."

PART VII.

THE CONCLUSION.

175.

Slow tolled the bell its mournful knell,
As earth and stone on coffin fell—
Still tolling slowly, while, meek and lowly,
He read for the dead the scriptures holy,
Where the dark yew sadly waves
Over the household graves.

176

"Earth to earth, and dust to dust,
We yield in glorious hope and trust;
Who sleep in Jesus—only sleep,
Who sow corruption yet shall reap
Incorruption, tried,
Refined, and glorified.

177.

"Cometh yet the trump of doom
To dust and darkness of the tomb;
Cometh judgment, and the throne
White, exalted; and thereon
Sits the Lamb that died,
For sinners crucified."

178.

Mellow and low the words were spoken,
With falling tear and accents broken,
For with the hope the sorrow strove,
And sad sweet memories of love;
The earth on the coffin fell,
And on his heart as well.

179.

In old Newbattle 'mong the limes,
Where they had walked in happier times,
There now the friend of youth he laid
Beside his loved ones, by his dead;
Then turned him to the strife
And weary task of life.

180.

"Too long," he said, "have I, too long,
Witnessed oppression, grieved for wrong,
And played the coward to the truth,
Even seeming false to human ruth,
Although my heart was burning,
And pity in me yearning:

181.

"I have indulged me with the thought
Of peace on earth, when peace was not,
And made a dreamland for my soul,
Where life's stern law held no control,
Nor fact nor duty was
What God would bring to pass.

182.

"Forgive me, Lord; Thou gavest me
A warfare to be fought for Thee,
And I the conflict high declined
For vagrant fancies of the mind,
And mine appointed lot
Neglected and forgot.

183.

"Vain wisdom his—presumptuous sense,
Who will not take from Providence
The cup it mingles, but will go
In sparks of his own kindling. Lo!
The mighty age sweeps on;
He eddies there alone.

184.

"May no man leave the solid earth,
And call his dream a thing of worth;
May no man lightly turn away
From strife or sorrow of his day:—
The godlike is to do
What God has laid to you.

185.

"We have an hour allotted thus;
We have a task appointed us;
Nor culture of the mind and heart
Shall be the Christian's only part;
But he shall bend his will
To present duty still.

186.

"In life of others we do live,
And joy in all the joy we give :
If mine own soul alone I cherish,
My soul shall in my brother perish :
Living, alas ! I die ;
But dying live shall I.

187.

"So let me gird my loins with prayer,
And for the weary task prepare :
Nor falter, irksome though it be,
Nor do the right despondingly :
I did not take the mitre
To make my labour lighter.

188.

"Yea, I will hope, O Lord, in Thee
That faithful work shall fruitful be :
Tears, bitter tears, may fall like rain,
Yet shower upon the earth in vain :
But the true work is never
A profitless endeavour.

189.

"Perchance the fruit is not to-day,
For the quick growth hath quick decay;
But we shall sow and others reap,
And they shall joy though we may weep;
Yet in the harvest shall
Be gladness unto all.

190.

"Then, what if my small seed should be
Reaped in another century,
And understood, and loved by them
Who then, in our Jerusalem,
Shall peacefully combine
Under the fig and vine?

191.

"What if my little light now lost
In our wild turmoil, tempest-tossed,
Should gleam upon another age,
And beacon, on their pilgrimage
Of hope and blessing, some
Who unto Christ would come?

192.

"What if the shadow I project
Upon the clouds that now deject
Our weary times, seen far away
By kindlier eyes some distant day,
Should lead them to be just
When I am in the dust?

193.

"Or what, if, to rebuke my vain
And foolish thoughts, the Lord maintain
Nothing of all I do or say,
But sweep the structure all away,
And me and my poor fate
Wisely obliterate?

194.

"O what am I, or aught I've done,
That I should 'scape oblivion?
That Death, when he dissolves this frame,
Should spare my shadow and my name?
Lord, as the ages run,
Still let Thy will be done.

195.

"We would be something who are nought;
And if we work where Thou hast wrought,
The hodmen of Thy temple, we
Would hand our name to history,
With the great architect
Who did it all erect.

196.

"O proud ambition to be known!
Envious that He should be alone.
Still on our little self we brood,
Still boastful of our little good,
Still panting for a name
On crumbling niche of fame.

197.

"Work all intent, while work ye may;
Work now while it is called to-day;
Strive for the duty to be fit,
Then toil with might to perfect it;
Think not what thou hast done,
Think of thy task alone.

198.

"Enough, if such poor work as thine
Hath place at all in His design;
Enough in Temple grand, divine,
To hew a stone, or hold a line;
High honour thou hast got;
Rejoice and murmur not.

199.

"So let me sink to nothingness,
For I am nothing—I am less;
Nought have I, for I am in debt;
Nought would I, Lord, but to forget
My foolish self in Thee
Unto Eternity.

200.

"And thou, my friend, farewell again!
I weep no more, for tears are vain;
But, if from spheres of light thine eye
Bend sometimes on our misery,
As often it hath seemed,
Or I have fondly dreamed;

201.

"If eyes that look on glory ever
Can look upon our poor endeavour,
Me no more dreaming shalt thou see—
Thy death hath given life to me,
And I have seen that duty
Is the most Holy Beauty."

MINOR POEMS

ON THE BISHOP'S TIMES.

FROM THE BASS.[1]

THERE were three of us, when we took the road,
To carry the news to the people of God.
And we met by chance in the market place,
Under the gibbet we thought to grace,
Some day yet, with an honest face.
A black night, I remember me :
The wet wind roared in the creaking tree,
Where the hoarse raven was hard bestead
To balance himself on a martyr's head,
Holding on with claw and beak,
And clapping his wings to the withered cheek
Grimly at each sudden gust.
"Hist!" quoth my neighbour Irwine, "Hist!
To the hornet's nest in the castle rock :
They're stirring now. God help the folk
On the Pentland Hills to-night!"

Quoth I,
At sunset I was hurrying by
St. Giles, when the courier, white with spray
From the bit and flanks of his jaded bay,
Pulled up on his haunches sudden; and forth
Rushed our dry-weasened curate, that came from
the north,
And patters the prayers from his painted missal
With a squeaking voice like a penny whistle,
Nodding his wig like a downy thistle.
So I pricked up my ears for news, the while
Our priestling stood with a greasy smile
Wrinkling a countenance sallow with bile.
"Ho! now, sir curate, 'tis our time at last,
And we'll tutor the Whigs to feast or fast,
Or pray with candle and book and bell,
Or any thing likes you in heaven or hell.
Hast heard the news? At noon a crew
Of psalm-singing villains beset and slew
The good archbishop on Magus Moor—
Burley and Hackston and some few more—
Answered his prayers with a rascal laugh,
And split his skull with a Jeddart staff.

There's news makes your ears to tingle.—Ho!
What crop-eared dog have we here, I trow
Eavesdropping?" Then I heard a crash,
And there came on my crown a sabre-slash;
And the courier galloped along the street.
But that my bonnet was padded, to meet
By-strokes of this sort, I had been dead;
For all that our sucking bishop said,
Was "Now will our dean get the vacant see,
And what may the prospect be for me?"
So, neighbour Irwine, you well may say,
"God be on the Pentland Hills this day."

We parted then, each with a burden of thought;
As a gust of wind from the castle brought
The din of arms and clattering hoof
From the rough causeway far aloof;
While the raven croaked his rusty caw,
Cawing over the soldier's law—
It was ever a friend to the raven's maw.
Never another word crossed our lip;
Only we knew by the stedfast grip

Of each other's hand—a certain token—
That each had a matter as yet unspoken.

I was the youngest of all the three;
And they should have left this gear to me.
And I should have told them plainly too
What it was in my heart to do.
But somehow or other that courier's sabre
Rang in my head like a sounding tabor;
And then we were hurried, for two or three
Might not meet, but the devil would be
Right in the midst of them, syne or soon,
In the shape of a curate or dragoon,
To worm the secret out of your head.
Yet I was the youngest, and should have said
Plainly out to them all my will;
And the old man's gray hairs haunt me still—
The weird gray locks, and the withered skin,
And the dark red pool they were dabbled in.

As I say, I was young, and in troth, till of late,
Tippet and rocket, church and state,
Missal and Bible, bishop and priest,

Mitre and altar, fast and feast,
Little recked I of them, better or worse,
If they left me only my hound and horse,
A broad brown moor and a stag to course.
Nay, I had been mettlesome, given to frolic,
And once on a day gave our bishop a colic,
By stately robing our old gray cat
In Episcopal raiment, rocket and hat,
And sending her out to hunt a mouse,
Just as his Lordship left the house.
But my wife Meg—I was courting her then—
Would not hold nor bide from the westland men;
And I never could round a word in her ear,
If I went not with her to pray, and hear
Saintly men in cellars hidden,
And Gospel truth from lips forbidden.
So I followed with never a graver thought;
Till found of Him whom I had not sought;
For, mirthful and mettlesome, God's own grace
Plucked me a brand from the burning place.

Now, there was a rumour that Christ would grace
A table next day in the wilderness;

And I thought, as I heard the gathering hum,
The trumpet call, and the rolling drum,
The pawing hoof, and the jangling rein,
Up in the castle rock again,—
"They are gathering here for deeds accursed;
They are gathering there with hearts a-thirst
For the water of life; and I must to the road,
And keep the wolf from the lambs of God.
Here's Turner with his hireling loons,
And Claverse with his devil's dragoons,
And Grierson o' Lagg and Dalzell o' the Binns,
With the blood of saints on their leprous skins;
And the blood of the bishop on Magus Moor,
Pricking them on for vengeance sure.
And there, by misty glen and rock,
Old men and maidens, the best of the stock
Our land ever bred—be the others who may—
In maud and bonnet they gather to pray.
And God sees all: but the bishop's ghost
Will be in, I fear, at the winning post."

So I mused down the street, till I reached my
own door,

Where I swithered uncertain, a minute or more ;
Then I crossed to the other side, hoping to see
My wife busy as wont at her housewifery ;
For she had no thought of what was astir,
And it might be the last I should see of her.
Then I took up my stand in a darksome nook,
Where the rain guttered on me, just craving one
look
Of her bonny blithe face ere I set to the road,
And to leave her the peace and the blessing of God.
But when I glanced up, there she stood with our
child,
Looking wistfully out on the tempest wild ;
And she hushed the baby that wept on her breast,
And she moved about with a strange unrest,
And she brought to the window a blazing light,
And peered out into the darksome night.
And I could not abide to part from her so :
Just a word, and a kiss, and then I would go ;
No harm could come of a word and a kiss :
And how could I leave her in wretchedness ?
But alas ! when I found me in her embrace,
And the babe on my knee crowing up in my face,

And the fire blazing cheerily there on the hearth,
And her eyes glancing clear, and the light-hearted
mirth
Gleesomely singing about the room,
Blithe as the birds in the early bloom;
I had not the heart to break in on her joy.
So the hours flew by; she cradled the boy
Asleep on her round and dimpled arm,
Asleep on her bosom soft and warm,
And held him up for a parting kiss,
With a look of beaming happiness.
And then with mingled smiles and tears,
She spake of boding thoughts and fears,
Weird dreams and tales and luckless rhymes
Of murdered men in olden times,
Which haunted her the live-long night;
And she could not get rid of them do what she
might.
She had heard them last by her grandam's knee;
And what a foolish thing was she,
To have such silly thoughts of me!
You may be sure I had much to do,
Hearing her speak, to keep steady in view

The thing it was in my heart to do.
And once or twice it was on my tongue;
And once or twice the devil had sung
A pretty lying song in my ear:
But I drowned it quick with a word of prayer.
So the hours flew by till the midnight fell,
And the baby slept, and the mother as well;
And I crept from her side, like a guilty one,
To speed on the work that must be done—
God bless thee, Meg, and the little one!

On the Borough-muir road I had stabled a roan,
With plenty of mettle and plenty of bone;
And, just as the lights of morning broke,
By fits, like a flame leaping up in the smoke
Of a fresh green log, I was trotting along,
At a great round pace, with a silent throng
Of stars overhead, beheld now and then
Through a rift in the clouds, or a pause in the rain.
A chill eerie night! there was that in its breath
Made you creep, like the air in a room where Death
Is busy at work: and here and there,
Ghostly glimmering through the air,

Phantom-lights were twinkling late,
Quenchless either by wind or wet.
I was troubled at heart; for I thought at times
Of my wife, with her dreams and her luckless rhymes,
That would not go out of her head all night;
And whether she slept till morning light;
And how bitterly there she would weep and moan,
When she waked and found the bird was flown,
And would clasp the child, and be sure that they
Were widow and orphan made this day.
And then my conscience pricked me sore
That I should have been there long hours before.
But I never knew Turner's hireling loons,
Nor any of Claverse's devil's dragoons
Leave the flagon at break of day,
Till they slept the fumes of the drink away.
So I thought 'twould be hours ere they were astir,
And silently gave my roan the spur,
As she snorted, and pricked her ears forward, and strode
With her long round pace on the plashy road;
Holding on bravely by tower and tree,

By Glencorse water, and Woodhouselee,
And Rullion green where the battle befell
'Tween the westland folk and the bloody Dalzell.
And I never drew bridle and scarcely drew breath,
For I rode on an errand of life and death.
And I felt as if nought but a galloping pace
Could quiet my mind's uneasiness:
When all of a sudden my good roan steed,
Who never yet failed me in hour of need,
Sprang right from the path, with a cry of quick
fear—
A frightened cry and frightful to hear;
While caw, caw, caw! from under her hoof,
The raven lazily rose aloof;
Lazily rose on his broad black wing,
As loth to leave some horrible thing;
And I fell without sense of life or pain
On the brown heath 'mid the plashing rain—
The plashing rain, and the raven black,
Croaking and hopping lazily back.

How long in that stupor dull I lay
By the big white stone, I may not say:

But when I awoke, with senses dim,
And stiff and racked in each joint and limb,
The dawn had brightened into the day,
And the light birds sang on the bending spray,
And the rain-drops hung on the leaves overhead,
And the sunshine on the moorland played,
Like a radiant smile kindling up in a face,
And turning the rude into loveliness.
And there in the sunshine the old man lay,
And the pool was red, and his hair was gray;—
Grisled locks in a pool of blood;
While sleepily gorged the raven stood,
Blinking dull in the golden sun.
And God sees all: and the deed is done;
And the old man's race at length is run.

Too late—too late; my neighbour was dead;
The saints were slain, and the birds were fed;
From east and from west the trooper rode,
And the curate was priest, and the trooper his God;
And the wily informers had scent like a beagle,
And wherever the carcass was there was the eagle;
And the crook and the mitre were serfs to the sword,

And sanctified slaughter with texts from the Word;
And old men and maidens, preacher and people,
From kirk and from kirkyard, from pulpit and steeple,
They must take them to hiding, where hiding is sure,
By the bleak Moffat water or Annandale moor,
To the rocks and the mountains and dens of the earth;
And now in the wilderness all that is worth
Of us, withers and wanes, as the meek and the brave
Wait for the dawn, or look out for a grave.
But I have no part in their struggle or hope,
Though I hear now and then, something faintly, their scope
Whispered low in the ear, as the salt waves pass
And the sea-bird screams on the rocky Bass.
For they found me laid by my neighbour dead,
And they tried me with boots and a cord on my head,
That started the eyes from their pits, but the twine

Wrung not a word from lips of mine.
And the last that I saw of my wife, was then
When I witness bore in the sight of men,
And while the crafty lawyers plied me,
The crowd opened up and she stood beside me,
And she held up the boy, with a blush without shame,
Saying:—"He shall be proud of his father's name."

ROTHES (*Solus*).[2]

1.

WHAT will my wife say now?
She will be mad at our doings:
Good lass, she'll not swear; but she'll bow
Her knees to the Lord, and avow
We are bringing the glory to ruins.

2.

If she would but just rap out an oath,
It would ease her as much as a prayer,
And be very much better for both;
For I don't know how, but I'm loth
To face her meek look of despair;

3.

And to know that, all night on her knees,
  She will pray for the land and the kirk,
And the crown and the sword and the keys,
And the sinners that sit at their ease,
  Forgetting the covenant work.

4.

And it's that which drives me to drink;
  With less than a bottle or two,
To help me to hiccup and wink,
I'd face a cannon, I think,
  Sooner than come in her view.

5.

And yet she's a good little saint:
  What a knack she has now at praying!
With her texts, and her phrases quaint,
And a voice so low and faint;
  And no one to hear what she's saying!

6.

Never a soul to hear even a word;
Alone in the dark there at night,
She will keep it up with the Lord;
And I wish just the Archbishop heard
How she prays the old Ethiop white.

7.

Ecod! if she knew him as I,
She'd leave him alone in his skin.
Why, lass, he wishes to try
A screw on your thumb by and by,
And his boot on your tight little shin.

8.

But, curse him, before he does that
I'll give him an inch of cold steel
Right through the ribs and the fat,
As the man in the Judges gat,
For the good of the commonweal.

9.

Who could have told the kite
That I warned your chickens to run?
And he threeped it on me, in spite
Of my swearing black and white,—
Which a gentleman wouldn't have done.

10.

O wouldn't you just, my Lord
Archbishop, rejoice to twist
Round my wife's forehead a cord,
And wring from her lips a word
With a wedge on her poor little wrist?

11.

And what would you say to a clutch
Of my hand on your lying old throat?
I don't think the land would care much,
Though it found in the Leven such
A pious Archbishop afloat.

12.

It's the parson's business to preach
  A hell, when we give up our breath ;
But you make a hell for each
Who differs from what you teach,
  And you don't put it off till death

13.

Still that ugly test must be tried,
  A snare and a lie though it be;
For Lauderdale's Bess must hide,
With acres of land and pride,
  Her sins and her pedigree.

14.

And there will be nice pickings too,
  By Jove, for me and the like;
Ay, ay, Bess, the test will do
For me and the bishop and you,
  Rather more than our prayers belike.

15.

She's a rare one that for gold!
I wonder how Noll got on
With the jade: she's bought and sold
Fat Lauderdale, foolish and old,
And he can't call his soul his own.

16.

Ah! well; but commend me still
To a regular saint for a wife;
For, do what you like, good or ill,
They only just pray for you still,
And sweeten the bitter of life.

17.

There's my Anne now; she loves me, I swear,
Though she knows me as bad as the devil;
And when she found out that affair,
She did nothing but offer a prayer
To keep the old sinner from evil.

18.

And I've used her rascally bad;
There's no doubt of that, I admit;
And her dear little heart, when it's sad,
No comfort on earth ever had,
But a quiet religious fit.

19.

And yet I've agreed to that test
Which the crafty Archbishop may put her;
And I know that she'll only protest,
And pray, and go on like the rest,
With appeals to the Lord and the future.

20.

Why can't she be still, and content
With her preachings, her psalms, and
her prayers,
And to live like a sweet little saint,
And leave me to judge what is meant
By the things which they tell her are
snares?

21.

And where is the text and the line
For thus causing domestic strife?
Is there Father, or Pope, or Divine
Who will say that her God should be mine,
And that man should give in to his wife?

22.

Ah! well, but it's true, I have none,
Or nothing to speak of at least;
And I'd rather she prayed there alone
For a change in my heart of stone,
Than chose me old Sharpe for her priest.

23.

And they shan't touch a hair of her head,
While I have a hand and a dirk:
Bishop! ay, he's a Bishop we made
To bless all the blood that we shed,
And to rule in the devil's own kirk.

24.

Ho ! bring me a bottle of sack :
  Is my lady waiting up stairs ?
Say—I'm off and can hardly be back,
Say—I'm searching the pedlar's pack,
  Say—I'm gone, if you like, to my prayers.

25.

I can't see her face to-night ;
  I am sure she suspects what is doing ;
And then things get wind ; and they slight
Me at council, and say in their spite
  That I bring all their plans unto ruin.

26.

Now, I will see nobody till
  I shall be drunk as a lord,—
Then I shall see nobody still ;
But the parson may go, if he will,
  Unless he would stretch a hemp cord.

27.

Say, I don't want his blood on my head,
  And am very much needing his prayers,
As I mean to go drunk to my bed,
And am apt to be wild in the head,
  If I find anybody upstairs.

28.

It's a dreary place that den
  Between the Lomonds bleak;
But better for ghostly men
The ghostly and eerie glen
  Than to hear the gallows creak.

29.

Let the Archbishop gloom as he will;
  Let Lauderdale rant and swear;
I've but kept them from doing some ill,
And we'll all have our nice pickings still,
  When we ask them to vow and declare.

BURLEY.[3]

1.

I KILLED the Archbishop, while Hackston stood by,
And he was as much in the deed as I;
But, for they had a quarrel, his mind was not clear,
Our nice punctilious cavalier!

2.

O we must not sully the end we seek
With a personal grudge or a private pique!
So we stand aside in the noonday sun,
Like a stern old Roman and see the deed done.

3.

Was he better than I, with my dirk to the hilt
In the old man's heart, when his blood was spilt?
He had scruples forsooth—and the priest's head
was gray—
And he did not the deed, nor yet said it nay.

4.

Bah! give me a conscience that rules with a will,
Or one that can hold its peace and be still;
But neither the Lord nor the devil will care
For your conscience that scruples and splits on a hair.

5.

Was it wrong that I did? Did he merit his fate?
Our trust and his treason had made him so great
That he lorded it now who had fawned on us once,
And our lives must hang on his countenance:

6.

And the man who our grievances all was to cure,
Now clothed his pride with our forfeiture,
Worst grievance of all; and he gorged his hate
With the blood of the men he had served of late.

7.

Yes, I killed the Archbishop: and then for our life
Westward we galloped away from Fife,
Past Leslie where Rothes was drinking his wine,
And Loch Leven where Burleigh heard doctrine divine.

8.

At twilight we supped 'mong the Ochils with Bruce,
And by midnight at Stirling we flung the reins loose,
And walked our steeds slowly down the long street.
Silent, that echoed the tramp of their feet.

9.

Then away! in wild haste, o'er the Falkirk carse tame;—
Not a bridle was drawn till to Lanark we came;
When Rathillet sunk down and his horse, both
together
Bogged up to the girth in the miry heather.

10.

But now we were safe, for the gray dawn broke
On our haunt in the cave of the Cartland rock;
And straightway to clear him with all the nation,
Our knighthood emitted a declaration.

11.

With texts, and proofs, and references,
And justifications more or less,
And scruples nice, to a covenant nation
Rathillet emitted his declaration.

12.

Bah ! a thousand pikemen stout and sure,
And a thousand horse on Lanark moor,
With a brave true heart to lead them on,
And we more honour this day had won.

13.

O but this land is sorely vexed
With declaration and proof and text,
And scrupulous conscience, not quite clear,
And nice punctilious cavalier.

14.

Give me a company, give me a troop, or
Give me a flag with no quarter to look for;
O had we been but a thousand sure
To boot and saddle on Magus Moor.

PEDEN THE PROPHET.[4]

1.

Ah! woe for the Lamb's dear Bride!
  And woe for this covenant-land!
Compassed on every side
With hate and treason and pride,
  And feeble in heart and hand;
  The Lord will his wrath command
On a faithless land and Bride.

2.

Dark is the day; but worse
  The night that is fast drawing near,
With Death on his pale white horse,
And the dead lying hid in the gorse,
  And floating in river and mere,
  While the streets of the city appear
Red with the blood of the corse.

3.

I see the lean dogs creeping
To their feast in the lone dark street;
I see the foul birds leaping
To the house where a child is sleeping
On a mother's bosom sweet—
But her heart hath ceased to beat;
And the foul birds are croaking and leaping.

4.

And we've not seen the worst of it yet;
And I wot not whether I may,
Though I sought the Lord, when we met
Near the black Moffat-water, to get
Just a blink of light on my way,
And to know if I should play
The man in the worse times yet.

5.

But He said; "Content ye now,
  You shall be where I think best:"
"Yea, Lord," quoth I, "but Thou
Knowest I never did bow
  To Baal with the rest,
  Nor took the black, false test:"
But He said, "Content ye now."

6.

I was sitting alone on the hill
  By a thunder-blasted tree,
Where a corby had gorged his fill
Of a lamb that was lying ill;
    And in the red light he
    Stood winking drowsily,
With the blood and fat on his bill.

7.

The gray, cold mist was creeping
At gloaming over the hill,
The whaup in the stank was sleeping,
And the lonesome heron keeping
Its watch where the pool was still,
And slow and gray and chill
The gloaming mist was creeping.

8.

Then I saw, as plain as eye
Could see, the veil uplift,
And the dark years sweeping by
In terror and misery—
Dark years, with never a rift
In the cloud of blackness, swift
Went sweeping gloomily by.

9.

Airsmoss was but a ploy,
  And the Pentlands only a jest,
And Bothwell Brig was a toy,
And the Highland raid a joy;
  For East shall cry to West,
  And the dead shall seem to be blest,
And all the past but a ploy.

10.

I saw the trooper ride,
  With the blood on his bridle hand,
Down by the Solway tide,
And over the banks of Clyde;
  I saw o'er all the land
  The gruesome gibbet stand,
And the godless trooper ride.

11.

Silent the song of labour;
And the clap of the mill was dumb;
Hushed were the pipe and the tabor;
And only the clash of the sabre
Rang to the fife and the drum,
As the red troopers come,
Trampling the fields of our labour.

12.

The maid with her milking pail
Wept at the empty byre;
Dazed and eerie and pale,
The husbandman with his flail
Stood by the smouldering pyre,
And thrashed the red sparks of fire
From the burning rick with his flail.

13.

Wailing down in the glen,
  Weeping up on the hill,
A cry from the cities of men,
And the cleft of the rock and the den;
  For the dead lay unburied, until
  The time and half time fulfil
The word of the Lord of men.

14.

There was none to woo or to wed,
  There was none to speak of cheer,
There was none to lift up the head,
As the land sat down with its dead—
  Sat in the dust with fear,
  While the Baal-priests drew near,
And mocked at the bowed-down head.

15.

No psalm of the saints was heard,
  But the croak of the raven hoarse ;
No faithful Gospel word,
But the caw of the carrion bird,
  As he flapped his broad wings o'er a corse
  To Death on the pale white horse—
That was the psalm that was heard.

16.

Labour, and pleasure, and faith,
  All of them were forgot,
And men held in their breath
At the ghastly riot of death ;
  For terror did quite besot
  Even them who had wrestled and fought
Hitherto in the hope of the faith.

17.

I saw it all, and I think,
  The Lord hath shewn to me
Sometimes a wonderful blink
Of things beyond the brink
  Of the dark futurity,—
  Even more than I want to see ;
But it's all for your good, I think.

18.

You call me a prophet, and
  Maybe I am, indeed,
All the prophet a land
That hath broken its covenant band,
  Either shall get or need—
  And yet but a shaking reed
In a dreary desert land.

19.

Sometimes I'm tempted sore
  To say, Lord, let me be
As blind as others or more ;
And sometimes I've thought, before,
  It was but guessing in me,
  And nothing of prophecy,—
Shrewd guessing, and nothing more.

20.

So the Tempter will sift me like wheat,
  Till I say to him, Get thee behind !
Or trample him under my feet :—
And bless me not when you meet,
  For it's not all blessing, I find ;
  Yea, I had liefer be blind,
When Satan will sift me like wheat.

21.

And guess or grace, I am sure
  There are dark days near at hand
For the Lord's afflicted poor
And the Lamb's bride to endure,
  In a waste and weary land,
  From gaol and gibbet and brand,
And the trooper's vengeance sure.

22.

For if God ever spoke to me,
  It was just that night on the hill,
As I sat by the blasted tree,
And the gray mists eerily
  Crept, ghostly and slow and chill,
  And the corby gorged his fill,
As the word was given to me.

OLD GREYFRIARS.[5]

1.

All of us from the western shires,
  Fifteen hundred men,
They marched us into the Old Greyfriars,
  About the stroke of ten:
Hungry and wounded and worn and weary,
  We wist it was but for a night
That they marched us into the kirkyard eerie,
  In the dusky evening light.

2.

A bonny kirkyard is the Old Greyfriars,
  When the wall-flower blooms in June,
And scatters its scent with the fresh sweet-briar's
  Under the glint of the moon:
And we ranged us on the green grass there,
  Or under the ivy-tod,
And raised our psalm and offered our prayer
  To Jacob's mighty God.

3.

But long ere the dank November day,
When the earth was sodden with rain,
And the chill fog clung where the long grass lay
Rotting with damp amain,
Of all who came from the western shires,
The fifteen hundred men,
Had you reckoned us well in the Old Greyfriars,
Not three were there for ten.

4.

There were some that died in the summer tide,
Rotting away like sheep;
There were some went mad with the visions
they had,
Between awake and asleep;
And some were traitors to the faith,
And signed their hope away—
Better for them had they met their death
On Bothwell Brig that day.

5.

O Bothwell Brig! that wert so big
With hope to us and more;
O Bothwell Brig! the westland whig
May well thy name deplore.
And ye who would guide the stormy tide,
Think well ere ye begin;
For ye scrupled away our lives that day,
Ere we the bridge could win.

6.

It's O for courage! and O for sense!
And a Joab with the host!
That we may stand on our sure defence,
Ere yet the day be lost.
Here were we from the western shires,
Good fifteen hundred men;
And reckon us now in the Old Greyfriars,
There are not three for ten.

THE CONFESSION OF ANNAPLE GOWDIE, WITCH.[6]

1.

ANNIE WINNIE and me
Were both at Yester kirk;—
She on a broom, and I on a straw,
"Horse and hattock" o'er Berwick Law
We rode away in the mirk.

2.

It was Fastern's Even,
And we lichted down on a grave;
Where an ape preached loud to a ghostly crowd,
Surpliced well with a bonny white shroud,
And a corby sang the stave.

3.

"The covin" all was there;
  Thirteen of us with "the maid;"—
She was Bessie Vickar from Kelvin side;
And wow! but she hotched in her unco pride—
  Deil thraw her neck for a jade.

4.

And there was Pickle-the-wind,
  And there was Over-the-dyke,
And Ailie Nesbit, Able-and-stout,
And Elspie Gourlay, Good-at-a-bout;
  Buzzing all like a byke.

5.

Black Jock was in his tantrums;
  And hech! but he was daft!
Alick Flett with his chanter het,
Fizzing whenever his lips it met,
  Skirled away in the laft.

6.

Oh, we were crouse and canty
  A' doon in Yester kirk,
And we supped on the toad and the hooded craw,
Daintily spread on a coffin braw,
  At midnight in the mirk.

7.

And syne we held a session,
  And tried the lasses there;
Twal gruesome carles were elders good,
And a black tom-cat for bethral stood,
  And the foul fiend took the chair.

8.

And Elspie Gourlay first
  Confessed to a strangled bairn;
And Bessie Vickar allowed that she
Whummled a boat in a quiet sea,
  With a bonny young bride in the stern,

9.

And some had played their cantrips
  Wi' poor wives' milking kine;
And one had made an image good,
And crucified on the holy rood,
  That the Laird's ae son micht pine.

10.

But me and Annie Winnie,
  The foul thief kissed us baith;
For we choked the priest on the Eucharist,
When he was glowering at Effie M'Christ,
  And speaking of holy faith.

11.

Hech! sirs, but we had grand fun
  Wi' the muckle black deil in the chair,
And the muckle Bible upside doon,
A' gangin' withershins roun' and roun',
  And backwards saying the prayer.

12.

About the warlock's grave
  Withershins gangin' roun',
And kimmer and carline had for licht
The fat o' a bairn they buried that nicht,
  Unchristened beneath the moon.

13.

And, when the red cock crew
  In the farmstead up on the hill,
And the black tom-cat began to mew,
Witch and warlock, away we flew
  In the morning gray and chill.

14.

And my gudeman was sleeping,
  Wi' the besom at his side,
And hech! but he kissed the bonny broom,
My braw gudeman, my auld bridegroom,
  As I lichted doon frae my ride.

15.

And Annie Winnie and me
  Crack crouse o' Yester kirk,
And how she on the broom and I on a straw,
"Horse and hattock" o'er Berwick Law
  Rode away in the mirk.

THE COMPLAINT OF DEACON BIRSE,[7]

BURGESS, ABERDEEN.

1.

A PLAGUE on their kirks and their covenants both!
  And their preachings long and rife!
I wot not how many a test and oath
  I have ta'en for a quiet life.
First I must swear to Master Cant,
  And then to the Solemn League;
And then they would have me both recant,
  And join some other intrigue.

2.

I've sworn at their bidding black and white,
  And signed and sealed and declared,
I've boxed the compass round outright,
  And the feint a boddle I cared;
And I hardly know what I am to-day,
  Or what was the last I swore;
But hey! for the friar of orders gray!
  He's ready to clear my score.

3.

A plague on them all—their mitre, and bishop,
  Their presbyter and their Book!
Can't they leave me alone to barrel my fish up?
  And hang my pot on the crook?
A bonny kirk! as poor as a rat,
  And hungry as ever a beagle,
A brat that an imp of the devil begat,
  The protestant wallydraigle!

4.

I want to trade in timber and hide,
  And salmon from the Dee,
And the bonny white pearls from Ythan side,
  And the herring that crowds the sea;
For silk to busk my lady fine,
  Or brandy in the flask,
Or a drop of the kindly claret wine,
  Or malvoisie in the cask.

5.

I've a lugger good with Tarland wood
  For Flushing ready to sail;
And my dainty smack, by the almanac,
  Should be home from Portingale;
But what with their kirk and their covenant work,
  Hardly a wind blows right;
And we'll never have luck till the ancient kirk
  Comes to her own some night.

6.

That's a vintage coming from Portingale,
  Will make old Rothes smack;
And the tippling Chancellor pays me well,
  When he sends me a cargo back—
A cargo of canting preachers for 't,
  To sell in the new plantation;
Hee! they set me once in a sackcloth shirt
  To win my soul's salvation.

7.

A plague on them all! but they won't grow fat
  In my old schooner's hold,
With a skipper who knows what I would be at,
  And who likes the chink of the gold.
And, if some of them happen to die on the way,
  Who forced their oaths down my throat;
It's hey! for the friar of orders gray
  Who assoilzies me all for a groat.

MARION BROWN'S LAMENT.[s]

1.

"What think you now of your braw goodman?"
Ah! woe is me!
My heart was high when I began,
My heart was high, and my answer ran,
"More than ever he is to me."

2.

Mickle thought I of my bridegroom brave,
Ah! woe is me!
Mickle I thought of him douce and grave,
When he waled me out among the lave,
Me a poor maiden his wife to be.

3.

But there on the greensward lying dead,
Ah ! woe is me !
As I laid on my lap his noble head,
And kissed the lips that for Jesus bled,
More than ever he was to me.

4.

My heart was high when I began,
Ah ! woe is me !
I was so proud of my brave goodman,
Never a tear from my eyelids ran,
Although they gathered in my e'e.

5.

But when I laid him on his bed,
Ah ! woe is me !
And spread the face-cloth over his head,
And sat me down beside my dead,
O but my heart grew sair in me.

6.

Weary and eerie the night went by,
Ah! woe is me!
Dark and cold, and so was I,
And aye the wind moaned drearily
Over the moor and back to me.

7.

And aye as I looked at the empty chair,
Ah! woe is me!
And the Book that he left open there,
And the text that bade me cast my care
On the Father of all that cared for me;

8.

And aye as my Mary and little Will,
Ah! woe is me!
Whispered, Father is sleeping still,
And hush! for Minnie is weary and ill,
My heart was like to break in me.

9.

It's well for men to be heroes grand;
Ah! woe is me!
But a woman's hearth is her country, and
A desolate home is a desolate land;
And he was all the world to me.

M'KAIL'S FAREWELL.[9]

1.

Farewell, my friends, and parents dear;
And weep not o'er my bloody bier,
For grace and glory triumph here.

2.

Farewell, my foes; I pray for you;
Shew mercy, Lord, for Thou art true;
Alas! they know not what they do.

3.

Farewell, thou earth, where I have trod,
And seen the wondrous ways of God,
With comfort of his staff and rod.

4.

Farewell, ye sun and moon and stars,
And planets pale, and fiery Mars,
And comets dire, foreboding wars:

5.

Star-pavement of His house are ye,
Shining in glorious majesty.
But soon beneath my feet shall be.

6.

Farewell, thou Book of grace divine,
So loved and pondered every line,
Book of the world's best hope and mine:

7.

Soon, face to face, I'll see with awe
The gospel truth and holy law,
Which yet as in a glass I saw.

8.

And farewell, church, the Lamb's dear bride,
Whose garments now with blood are dyed,
With blood, too, washed and purified;

9.

And farewell, time; I part with thee,
And welcome immortality,
And incorrupted life to me.

10.

Mortal, immortal now, to Him,
Who sits between the cherubim,
I sing the everlasting hymn ;

11.

" Worthy the Lamb for us that died,
With crown of thorn and wounded side,
Despised, rejected, crucified."

12.

I hear the strain, and would away
To them who neither preach nor pray,
But praise for ever, night and day.

13.

Farewell, I step on that bright shore ;
My weary pilgrimage is o'er,
And welcome home for evermore.

NOTES TO THE BISHOP'S WALK.

[1] We have few Cathedral towns in Scotland, and none of them now possesses, like those of England, all the peculiar characteristics I have sought to indicate. I had indeed Dunblane in my eye, but the portrait broadened into the general idea of a Cathedral city.

[2] Mr. Buckles' able History of Civilization seems, with elaborate reasoning and rather pretentious display of reading, to go on the principle that the one thing to be got rid of, as retarding human progress, is God.

[3] Part of the tower of Dunblane Cathedral is thought to be of Culdee architecture. It is certainly much older than the rest of the church. Of the Culdees I know little, and find nobody to tell me much more. I may take the liberty of adding here, that the description of the cathedral, in the succeeding part, is from memory; so that if any strenuous Ruskinite should find even glaring errors in it, I hope he will deal mercifully with a mere layman who has simply tried to recall the impression which its beauty left on his mind.

[4] Mr. Burgon states in his Life of P. F. Tytler, that a copy of Herbert's Poems, with notes by Leighton, once existed in the library at Dunblane. It certainly is not there now ; and I take this opportunity of again advertising all whom it may concern, that, if they do not return it, all literature will *persecute* them.

[5] I need hardly remind the readers of Leighton that this figure is his own.

[6] We have not many of Leighton's thoughts on the times in which he lived—only enough to shew that he all but despaired of them. There seems to have existed at one time a large body of his letters, but what is come of them we know not. It is an unspeakable loss to literature and history and religion, for the few that do exist, are precious beyond measure.

[7] Rutherford, whose letters from the prison at Aberdeen are a source of comfort to thousands.

[8] D. Dickson, whose hymn to Jerusalem is well known.

[9] A frequent sentiment of Leighton's.

[10] Douay was a favourite resort of his. There seem to have been Jansenist priests there with whom he took sweet counsel.

[11] In a noble letter Leighton describes such a state of mind, evidently from a bitter experience of its reality.

[12] Usen or Ulyshaven, near Montrose, the original seat of the Leightons.

[13] I hesitated for some time to write this, ignorant what the experience of others might be. But I had again and again seen the faces of the dying kindle up, sometimes with a gleam of light unspeakably beautiful,

sometimes with a flash of old natural humour, stranger still; and whatever it means, it seems well to record it.

[14] No part of Mr. M. Napier's multifarious labours appears to me so satisfactory as that in which he discovered to us a high-minded constitutional statesman in the son of the great Napier.

NOTES TO MINOR POEMS.

[1] For English readers it may be as well to say, that the Bass is an island-rock in the Firth of Forth, near Dunbar, containing a fortress in which many of the political offenders of that age were confined. The incident recorded here is purely imaginary; and the poem is simply an attempt to call up, with clear human interest, an idea of the dark times immediately succeeding the murder of Archbishop Sharpe. So far, I hope, it will be found generally true to the historic idea of that period. Leighton, I may note here, left Scotland in 1674, while Sharpe's murder took place on 2d May 1679. The spirit of the age, however, was much the same as it had been—only perhaps rather worse.

[2] The Chancellor, Duke of Rothes, was married to Lady Anne Lyndsay who greatly favoured the covenanting party, and did what she could to protect them. Tradition says that her easy unprincipled lord, who was not without some natural kindliness, used to warn her when any of her favourite preachers were in danger, by saying, "Take care of your chickens—the

kites are abroad," and that their common hiding-place was the lonely glen between the Fife Lomonds. I may add, that the sentiments he is made to express about Sharpe were, I believe, shared by him and by all his lay colleagues in the ministry. I am aware, indeed, that he wrote in a different strain after the death of the wily archbishop. But it is easy to see why he should pen a decent letter on such an occasion; and it is very doubtful if any one in the country really mourned for Sharpe, except his unhappy daughter, and his brethren in the Episcopate who lost in him their surest card. The person alluded to under the name of "Lauderdale's Bess," is Elizabeth Murray, Duchess of Lauderdale. She is said to have been a mistress of Cromwell's in his wild youth. Her story is one of the strangest romances of that age.

[3] John Balfour of Kinloch, called Burley, was only a scion of the great House of Burleigh, whose ruined castle still stands on the shores of Lochleven. He was a violent man, such as often turns up in revolutionary times, and chafed impatiently at the constitutional way in which the greater part of the covenanters sought to accomplish the inevitable revolution. So far he was probably right; for when men have made up their minds that there is no help for them but in civil war, it is mere trifling to go on emitting declarations and protests, when they should be taking to their weapons. But if they were scrupulous, he was unhappily the reverse. Indeed, Scott's picture of him is probably true throughout; only he might have shewn more clearly how little sympathy existed

between the party in general, and such fanatical ruffianism as that of Burley and Hamilton.

[4] Alexander Peden, to whom, for the first time, justice is done by Mr. Dodds, was a man of shrewd sense and high poetic faculty, exhibiting itself often in a quaint homely way, yet full of imaginative power. That such a temperament should lead him to vaticinate was natural; and it was natural also that his clear insight and faith in right should frequently suggest correct presages of coming events. Nor will any one wonder that, living among the lonely hills, and brooding continually on the evils of the time, his imagination did sometimes prevail over his judgment, and lead him perhaps to think that "the dream was from God." One cannot help wondering now and then at the way in which such a character is regarded by some of our *litterateurs*. If a Highlander has his second sight, what a deal is made of it! If a poor covenanter dreams a bit of dream, he is a fool, or a fanatic, or a rogue. Great is the virtue of the Highland line! Cross it, and you shall find the faith to which all things are possible.

[5] After the battle of Bothwell Brig, some fifteen hundred prisoners were shut up in the Greyfriars' Churchyard, Edinburgh, and confined there for five months. Many of course perished; some broke down, and some three hundred and fifty were at last shipped off to be sold for slaves in America; but the vessel was wrecked, and the hatches being kept close, nearly all of them perished.

[6] In this poem I have simply digested the sub-

stance of a somewhat miscellaneous and unprofitable reading of witch trials. Confessions of this sort were not at all uncommon, explain the fact as we may. The essential features of Annaple Gowdie's declaration will be found in the statements of the witches of Auldearn, as given by Mr. Chambers in his Domestic Annals of Scotland. There are one or two phrases in it which may require explanation. "Horse and hattock" was the expression used by witches when they mounted the broom or straw on which they were to ride through the air. "Withershins" means going contrary to the sun; and it may be noted, as probably containing a deep symbolic idea, that the witch-rites were generally described as contrary to nature. To read the Bible upside down—to say prayers backward—to do anything withershins—these were the appropriate acts of devil-worship, according to this universal superstition. It was also common to give the good ladies nicknames, such as I have used here, taking them from Mr. Chambers. The "covin" was a group of thirteen—hence the devil's dozen, perhaps,—of whom the youngest was called "the maid," or favourite for the time. Generally, the maid was abundantly hated by her sisters.

[7] As I have said in the preface, the compulsory administration of tests and oaths tended naturally to produce hypocrisy and all manner of sordid baseness. In Aberdeen, where the Gordons and other great lords remained attached to the Romish creed, many of the citizens continued in that faith. Hence, when forced to adhere to the covenant, they kept secretly some priest, from whom they received absolution; and on the

Restoration, their hatred often manifested itself in some such way as that of worthy Deacon Birse.

[8] Marion, wife of John Brown commonly called The Christian Carrier, was a woman of high worth and nobleness. It is said that, on the murder of her husband, Claverhouse asked her with a scoff, "What think ye now of your braw goodman?" and on this word the poem is founded. There is some doubt thrown on the account of Brown's death as hitherto accredited. I cannot say that I partake of Mr. M. Napier's entire satisfaction in the discovery of the despatch by Claverhouse. It is not customary to take the statement of the accused as conclusive evidence in his favour. Nor is the omission in that despatch of any allusion to the reluctance of the soldiers to do the ruthless deed at all sufficient to disprove its perpetration. Those were times when the military must be conciliated, and many an irregularity overlooked, as the party in power had no other dependence. Still the evidence of that part of the story is not so full as it was once thought to be; only it should be remembered that, allowing all that his defenders claim in behalf of Claverhouse, this act still remains a cruel murder, perpetrated according to law no doubt, yet not the less murder. I suppose in these times the hateful police of Naples were only rigorously carrying out the tyrant's law; and all we ask for Claverhouse and his comrades is, that right-hearted men should view them as they regard the base tools of oppression lately in Italy.

[9] Hugh M'Kail was a young preacher of fine devotion and lofty piety. On his martyrdom, he

uttered the noble farewell which I have attempted simply to versify. Those who remember the original, will no doubt tell me, what I know already, that I have by no means improved it.

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